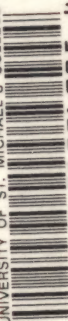


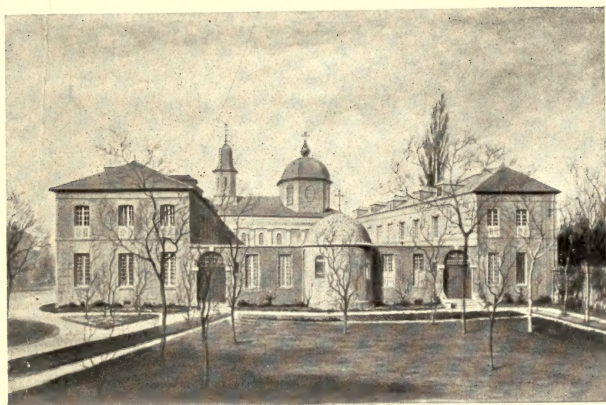
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GENERAL VIEW OF THE CARMEL OF LISIEUX



THE CARMEL QUADRANGLE.



The Foundation
OF THE
Carmel of Lisieux
AND
its Foundress

Reverend Mother
Geneviève of St. Teresa.

Translated from the French

BY A

Religious of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.

1913.

CARMEL OF LISIEUX (CALVADOS), FRANCE.

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FOREWORD.



Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus, in Chapter VIII. of her Life, speaks of "the happiness of having lived for several years with a Saint whose holiness was imitable, because it lay in the practice of ordinary and hidden virtues." It is this "Saint," Reverend Mother Geneviève of St. Teresa, whose history we now offer to the reader, together with an abridged account of the foundation of the Carmel at Lisieux.

The work, written in response to the desire of so many devoted admirers of Sister Teresa, is based on documents preserved in the monastery, and on the verbal testimony of those personally acquainted with the Reverend Mother Foundress.



CHAPTER I.

Circumstances which led to the foundation of the Carmel at Lisieux.

The Carmel of Pont-Audemer (Eure), which had been suppressed at the time of the Revolution, was re-established in the month of April, 1803, but, in order to obtain the requisite authorisation from the Government, it was found necessary to open a boarding school, although such a work was not according to the Constitutions of the Order. Among the pupils were two sisters, Gosselin by name, who were strongly drawn to the Carmelite life. Their delicate health having debarred them from being accepted as postulants, they determined to spend their fortune in founding a convent, where they could live as benefactresses under special vows, as is the custom of the Order. The project was submitted to His Lordship

Bishop Dancel of Bayeux and Lisieux, who gave it his formal approbation on December 16th, 1835, and decided that the foundation should be made at Lisieux. He died shortly afterwards, but his successor, Bishop Robin, a friend of the Gosselin family, inherited his goodwill towards the future foundation, and appointed as its Superior Father Peter Sauvage, first curate of the parish of St. James in Lisieux. This zealous priest, who was as remarkable for ability as for piety, left no stone unturned in order to carry out the undertaking. The task required much courage and perseverance, and the good Superior had to knock in vain at the door of many a Carmel before he could obtain nuns. But at last his prayers and those of the would-be foundresses and the postulants who had joined them were heard. On the advice of His Lordship Bishop de Beauregard of Orleans, the Superior made an application to the Carmel of Poitiers, and, after going on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Grace for its success, he received a favourable answer. On February 21st, 1837, came a letter from the Prioress (Reverend

Mother Pauline) promising to give nuns for the foundation, but asking that the Misses Gosselin and their companions should first make their noviceship at Poitiers. The postulants complied with her request. She received them on April 14th of the same year, and gave them the religious habit with the names of the four first Carmelites of St. Teresa's Reform. The elder of the two sisters was called Teresa of St. Joseph, the younger, Mary of the Cross, and the other novices were Antoinette of the Holy Ghost and Ursula of the Saints.

In the following year, as the time for making their vows was drawing near, they returned to Lisieux, accompanied by two professed nuns of Poitiers, Sister Elizabeth of St. Louis, who was appointed Prioress, and Sister Geneviève of St. Teresa, who was named Sub-Prioress and Mistress of Novices. They returned, as they had come, by diligence. Although it was a time of political unrest, when travelling in a religious dress carried with it a certain amount of risk, the brave little company refused to wear secular attire. The two professed

Sisters had the courage to cross Paris in their long black veils, and, though they attracted a great deal of attention, no one ventured to insult them. The journey was uneventful, but a strange reception awaited the travellers at Lisieux. In fact, the first scenes of this foundation remind us forcibly of those which have been immortalised by the pen of St. Teresa.

Nothing could have been more mournful and depressing than the arrival of the little band at nightfall, in the pouring rain, after a long journey made in a waggon covered with an awning, and driven postilion-wise by a friendly man who had a great respect for Carmelite poverty ! Equally dispiriting was the reception given them by a benefactress, Madame Le Boucher. This good woman, having been warned by a scrupulous friend that she must on no account break the great silence which the Carmelites kept after 8 p.m., followed her instructions to the letter, and, after receiving the religious into her house, left them the whole evening without speaking a single word to them !

CHAPTER II.

Temporary installation.

It was on March 16th, 1838, that the Carmelites arrived in Lisieux. While the novices had been at Poitiers, Father Sauvage had made many fruitless attempts to find a suitable house for them in the town. Madame Le Boucher at last came to the rescue by placing part of her own dwelling at the free disposal of the nuns. This arrangement, however, could only be a temporary one.

The house was a thatched one, situated in the Chaussée de Beuvilliers, and the religious found there, as Reverend Mother Geneviève of St. Teresa wrote later, "the poverty of Bethlehem, such as they had pictured it in their meditations." The accommodation was as cramped as it was poor; there were no cells for the novices, but two garrets, made into one by taking away the

door of communication, served as a dormitory. On the first floor, one room was suitably fitted up and transformed into a chapel, with an adjoining room as choir. Another room, eighteen feet square, at the end of a narrow passage, was partitioned off into three compartments, the first of which served as kitchen, the second as refectory and recreation-room, and the third as a cell for the Sub-Prioress. The latter had to use great precautions in going in and out of her narrow quarters to avoid upsetting the stove or breaking the plates and dishes. The refectory was so tiny that the nuns could only just manage to seat themselves at table.

The furniture was in keeping with the accommodation in the kitchen. A box was dignified by the name of sideboard; a large fire-screen skilfully placed in a corner did duty for a larder; and the paved floor had perforce to be used as a serving table.

The supply of crockery was so scanty that the plates had to be washed in the middle of dinner before the meal could be finished.

On the same first floor, which, with the novices' attics, made up the whole convent,

there was another little room, just big enough to be used as a cell for the Prioress. A parlour was, of course, out of the question, but a grated door in the middle of the passage enabled the Sisters to receive visitors, and did instead of a turn. The idea was ingenious, but not very practical, for this passage was the only way of reaching the staircase which led to the attics. The "property" was completed by a courtyard and a garden, both of which were exposed to the full view of the neighbours, so that the religious, who were anxious to keep their enclosure as strictly as possible, very rarely went into them. The townspeople, moreover, had shown no enthusiasm at their arrival. On the contrary, ill-natured reports were circulated concerning them, which finally came to the ears of Father Nicholas Sauvage, Vicar of St. James's, and uncle of the Superior. Consequently, when he said Mass in the little Convent chapel, he spoke in a whisper, like the priests of the first ages of the Church in the depths of the Catacombs. But the nuns, far from sharing his fears, made light of these precautions, and

on feast days sang the Office without lowering their voices.

Our Lord had taken up His abode in the poor little tabernacle from the very first evening of their arrival, and in His Divine company their destitution became a source of delight. They tasted the joy which always accompanies privations generously accepted, and the inconveniences which they had to suffer furnished matter for much merriment at recreation.

With true fervour of spirit, they tried to follow the strict observance of the Rule, and to keep the enclosure as far as was possible in their unconventional surroundings.

CHAPTER III.

Establishment of the Convent in the rue de Livarot.

This state of things lasted for five months, during which time a sufficiently large house, situated in the rue de Livarot, was at last found and purchased. The house was very old, and stood on the site of the present dwelling of the turn-Sisters.

The Prioress and Sub-Prioress, accompanied by Sister Teresa of St. Joseph (one of the most valuable subjects of the new foundation, who was later to fill for a term the office of Prioress) went at once to see the new premises, and to decide how they could be transformed into a Convent. It was then that Mother Elizabeth's talent for organisation showed itself, a talent which had greatly influenced her Superiors in making choice of her to found the Carmel at Lisieux.

While the building operations were in pro-

gress, Father Sauvage had the happy idea of making an altar of repose in a corridor of the new house for the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. It was while kneeling before the picture of St. Teresa, which hung over this altar, that a young girl, whom we shall meet again in the course of this narrative under the name of Sister Adelaide of Providence, saw the canvas become animate, and heard the words, "It is here you will become a nun." And the Carmel still continues to receive year by year the triumphal visit of its Eucharistic Lord on the feast of Corpus Christi.

But, although Our Lord Himself had thus taken first possession of the house, it was still in a state of complete chaos. Nevertheless, His Lordship Bishop Robin, without waiting for the regular Convent to be completed, came on August 24th to bless it. He had not chosen this particular date of set purpose, but it proved to be the exact anniversary of the day on which St. Teresa had founded the first Convent of the Reform. A great number of people came to the ceremony, attracted, doubtless, more by curiosity than

by devotion or sympathy, for if the civic authorities were not exactly hostile to the foundation, they, nevertheless, regarded it as useless. The part played by contemplative Orders in the Church was still unintelligible to many. The preachers who afterwards spoke in the Convent chapel on the occasion of clothings and professions, endeavoured, to the best of their power, to dispel these prejudices, and these efforts were, to a certain extent, successful.

Bishop Robin celebrated the first Mass in the temporary chapel, which was to do duty till 1852, and the Carmel of Lisieux was dedicated to Mary Immaculate. Later on, it received a further dedication to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Sisters assisted at the celebrations, but had afterwards to return to their cramped quarters in the Chaussée de Beuvilliers.

However, the building operations in the rue de Livarot were soon finished, and the nuns were able to take up their abode there on September 5th, 1838, when the enclosure was regularly established. They had parted not without regret from the charitable

widow, who, after the blunder of their first meeting, had always shown herself full of kindness and devotion towards them.

The new house was far from resembling a regular monastery in roominess and general convenience. Part of the loft had had to be divided up into cells in order to get the required number of twelve, and there was no sleeping accommodation for the turn-Sisters who at first were seculars. This necessitated one of the postulants leaving the enclosure every evening to shut the outside gate, and made it impossible for the Community to communicate with the outside world in case of illness or any alarm during the night.

Several cells, the chapter room, and the infirmary were on the first floor, but, in spite of Mother Elizabeth's powers of organisation, it had been necessary to put both kitchen and refectory on the second floor. The fatigue which this arrangement caused the poor lay Sister laid the seeds of a malady from which she eventually died. All the rooms were, of course, of the most modest dimensions.

A few days after the installation, on the tenth of the same month, the two Foundresses and Sister Antoinette of the Holy Ghost, whose name had been changed to Sister John of the Cross, made their vows.

Immediately after the arrival of the little colony at Lisieux, a postulant of the white veil,* Sister Radegunda of the Heart of Jesus, and a choir postulant Sister St. Joseph, had been received. They were soon followed by three others—a widow lady, who became Sister Louise of Jesus, Sister Adelaide of Providence, and Sister Aimée of Jesus. The latter was later to govern the Carmel of Lisieux for a term of three years; to go thence as Prioress to found the Carmel at Coutances, and to edify both by her virtues. By the year 1840 eight religious had already made their profession under Reverend Mother Elizabeth of St. Louis.

* The name given to Carmelite laysisters.

CHAPTER IV.

Poverty of the Convent.—Its growth.

The Convent gradually grew in size, the neighbouring houses being bought as soon as they were for sale. But the fortune of the two foundresses was not very large, and the first subjects had brought with them little or no dowry. The practical common sense and inventive prudence of the devoted Father Superior had consequently to be mingled with complete abandonment to Divine Providence. On several occasions he had recourse to collections, which he made either personally or by circular letters, or by the generous aid of Father Gauthier, Chaplain of the College of Lisieux, a Priest who ranks among the first benefactors of the Carmel. These collections, however, bore so little fruit that Father Gauthier finally gave them up. One year, after spending the two months of his vacation in going about from

town to town soliciting alms, he came back with the paltry sum of £3.

It so happened at the time that if the Father Superior had been willing to contract a loan, he could have acquired a neighbouring property, which would have enabled him to realise the plan laid down in the Cereimonial.* The suggestion was tempting, but he wisely refrained from carrying it out, doubtless understanding the reasons which have since led the Holy Father to forbid religious communities to borrow. "It seemed," wrote Father Sauvage in his book on the foundation, "as if Our Lord had taken on Himself the charge of providing for the temporal needs of His spouses, but He disposed things in such a way as to lead them to an absolute dependence on Himself. Sometimes He took away the supports on which they thought they could safely lean, and then gave them others which they had never even dreamt of. Had it not been

* The Cereimonial is a book in which the different customs of the Carmelite Order are recorded and which contains special regulations for the building and general management of the Convents.

for a special protection of His Providence, the nuns would over and over again have wanted even the necessities of life. They did not, like the Poor Clares, ring their bell as a signal of distress, but He Who cares for the birds of the air would send, just at the right moment, an unexpected alms which enabled them to go to market and procure their daily food."

Their poverty, nevertheless, was so great that more than once they had to content themselves with a dinner of fried leeks, a dish which recalls the vine leaves dressed in similar fashion by the first companions of St. Teresa. One of the postulants had her clothing indefinitely postponed because there was no money available to buy stuff for her habit.

But, as we have seen above, the Carmel succeeded in growing in spite of difficulties, though the growth was very slow. When Reverend Mother Elizabeth died, the regular Convent was hardly begun, and it was not finally completed till 1877, forty years after the work had been commenced. At the time of which we are speaking, therefore, the

present Convent was was not yet in existence. The first large wing was built in 1858, while Reverend Mother Aimée of Jesus was Prioress, Mother Teresa of St. Joseph being the architect. The sacristies are of the same date. The chapel was prior to this, the first stone having been laid on June 10th, 1845. It was solemnly blessed on September 6th, 1852, and a new choir for the religious was added about the same time. Finally, in 1876, Reverend Mother Mary Gonzaga (the religious who later was to open the doors of the Carmel to Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus) undertook with praiseworthy zeal the building of the second wing, in which are the infirmary and the cell of the Servant of God. She also had the Calvary in the quadrangle erected, and built the Oratory of the Sacred Heart with the fourth cloister, which completed the Convent as it stands to-day.

The present parlours are later than the date of Sister Teresa's entrance, and even than her clothing. Consequently the Servant of God never went into them, as many pilgrims to the Carmel suppose.

CHAPTER V.

Death of Reverend Mother Elizabeth of St. Louis

To return to the year 1841, all that was absolutely necessary had been done, and the Community was definitely established, though in very straitened circumstances. Mother Elizabeth had finished her appointed work, and God was shortly to call her to her eternal reward.

A few words about this holy religious will doubtless be of interest to the reader.

In the early days of her religious life she had been attacked by a pulmonary disease which threatened to be mortal, but she was miraculously cured by the saintly Archbishop d'Aviau of Bordeaux, who later was to baptise the father of the Little Flower. His Grace having gone to the Carmel of Poitiers to visit his sister, Bishop de Beau-regard, who was with him, drew his atten-

tion to Sister Elizabeth, and begged him to exercise his wonder-working powers in her regard. "Shall we give her the days of Ezechias?" asked the holy prelate, smiling, and, advancing towards her, he gave her his blessing, and she was completely cured.

Her noviciate, begun on the morrow of the Revolution and passed in the midst of troublous times, had cast her character in a stern mould. Something of this sternness appeared even in her exterior, in a certain brusqueness of manner, but this defect was amply redeemed by her kindness, her regularity, her courage, her zeal for God's glory, and her great trust in His Providence. "She had all the qualities necessary for the success of a foundation," wrote her former Prioress of Poitiers, Reverend Mother Pauline, on hearing the news of her death. Her spiritual children esteemed her virtues and valued her government, and their deep sorrow at her loss proves the sincere affection which she inspired. She died on January, 1842, at the age of sixty-five, after having held the office of Prioress for three and a half years.

She was succeeded by Mother Geneviève of St. Teresa, who was to be in things spiritual the real Foundress and Mother of the Carmel of Lisieux, for she it was who trained the souls of its members in the way of perfection, by the strong food of her counsels, the light of her example, and the support of her solicitude. His Lordship Bishop de Beauregard, the venerable Bishop of Orleans already named, to whom we shall often have reason to refer in this narrative, had foretold to her her life-work in these words: "You are going to Lisieux, not to build a house of material stones, but to raise in Gods' honour an edifice of living stones, of souls who are vowed to Him."



Reverend Mother
GENEVIEVE OF SAINT TERESA,
Foundress of the Carmel of Lisieux.

From an old painting kept in the Monastery

Part II.

**Reverend Mother
Genevieve of St. Teresa
(1805-1891.)**

CHAPTER I.

Childhood of Clare Bertrand.—Death of her mother.

Clare Mary Radegunda Bertrand was born at Poitiers on July 19th, 1805. Her father was a business agent in comfortable circumstances, and gave his daughter a good education according to the standard of the times. He was an upright man, and a good Christian, and his wife was exceedingly pious. Clare was their eldest-born, and after her came two sons.

From her cradle Clare was remarkable for her evenness of temper. She was rarely seen to cry, and when at the age of two she was attacked by a serious illness, she was never fretful, but showed even more sweetness than usual. This sweetness and power of endurance were manifested still more remarkably a little later on. She was sent to school very young, where she was most unjustly and harshly treated by her mistress,

whose example also incited the other children to torment their little companion by a series of petty persecutions. Years passed, but Clare never said a word about what she was suffering. She kept her secret heroically till the day of her first Communion, when everything was discovered. Her mother, grieved at what the child had had to bear, gently reproached her with not having spoken of it before. Clare's answer was a revelation of her simple and perfect charity: "Oh, mother, how could I say anything unkind of my mistress? It was much better for me to bear it." Whence, we may ask, did the child receive such surprising insight into the law of love? Whence did she gain strength to practice such great and constant meekness? It was from the spirit of Wisdom and Strength, Who was already finding His delight in her and communicating Himself to her soul. So, at least, the following incident leads us to suppose. When she was barely three and a half years of age, Clare could read perfectly, and very often, while her companions were running about playing in the garden, she would re-

tire apart with a book. This book one day aroused the curiosity of a lady, who, happening to pass by, was surprised to see the little girl so engrossed. To her questions the child replied: "Yes, this is a very interesting book, for it is the '*Imitation of Our Lord Jesus Christ*.' "

Clare's precocious virtue had been remarked by the venerable Father de Beau-regard, who later became Bishop of Orleans. An intrepid Confessor of the Faith, this holy Priest had been denied the palm of martyrdom during the dark days of the heroic band who were deported to Cayenne. He prepared the little girl for her first Communion with special care. That he already foresaw God's great designs on her soul is revealed by a passage in a letter which he wrote twenty years later: "From your earliest years I saw in you the makings of a Saint." Inspired by the true wisdom which God gives to His servants as the fruit and reward of their virtue, the holy director led Clare, as a child and as a young girl, in the straight road of truth. In order to keep her good and pure, and to train her

soul in perfection, he endeavoured to ground her deeply in humility, the foundation and rampart of all the virtues. "My child, why all these curls?" he asked one day when he thought she had paid too much attention to her appearance. "Do your hair more simply; it would look much better in bands. And, as for your dress, ask your mother to get you dark shades. You are not at all pretty, you are not rich, and you have not a pleasing manner, so whom are you hoping to captivate?"

Clare was sixteen when her excellent mother died. This cruel loss meant a grave responsibility for the young girl, but Clare fully grasped its extent, and accepted it with her usual sweetness and generosity. She became a loving and devoted mother to her brothers; by the force of her example, and the ascendancy which she exercised over them, she kept them in after life ever faithful to the path of duty. They, on their side, fully returned her affection, and Jules, the younger, was especially devoted to her. She never liked to be parted from him, and so she used to take him with her when she

went to pay calls. The child always grew weary on such occasions, and as soon as they were alone again, he would throw himself into her arms, saying, eagerly: "I only like being with you, my darling Clare!" At the age of seven, the little fellow was one evening the unconscious witness of an extraordinary grace with which God favoured His humble servant.

CHAPTER II.

Extraordinary graces.—Infidelities.

The sorrow of the mother's loss was soon increased by grave financial difficulties. The only possible means of meeting them seemed to be by selling the home, with its sweet and endearing memories.

One evening Mr. Bertrand had gone out to arrange about the sale, and Clare, quite prostrated by the excess of her grief, had not even the strength to pray. Her sobs were stifling her, but she did not dare to give free vent to her tears for fear of distressing little Jules, who, seeing her so sad, was fondling her in his loving childish way. She took up a book in order to hide her agitation, and, opening it at random, her eyes fell on a little picture of Our Lord. Immediately, by a miracle of grace, a sudden and marvellous change was wrought in her soul. God inundated her with a torrent of light, and, as if to give her a visible sign of what

he was working invisibly, she saw the picture of Our Lord grow luminous before her eyes. At the same instant she understood the true value of suffering, its purifying and sanctifying action on the soul, and the nothingness of all that passes with time. The glory of the world seemed to her utterly worthless, and its scorn greatly to be desired. She felt ready even to beg her bread if such should be the good pleasure of Jesus. Filled with ineffable consolation, her tears flowed freely, but they were tears of sweetness and joy. Her Heavenly Father having thus taken away from His child the fear of suffering, by revealing to her its price, now took away the cross which seemed about to press heavily on her shoulders. A devoted cousin procured for Mr. Bertrand the situation he wanted; the house was kept, and material cares soon vanished. If credit can be given to certain extraordinary graces, we may safely include those of our heroine in the number. Indeed, it would be difficult to believe that she was deceived by the spirit of darkness, or a victim of self-deception. Her imagination

was calm, her judgment sound, her piety, the outcome of a strong and simple faith, was alien to anything like sentiment, while her deep humility made her deem herself unworthy of heavenly favours.

A year passed after the events which we have just narrated. Clare was nearing her seventeenth year, and her constant prayer was that God would make known His Will concerning her. One day the answer came, unexpectedly, and irresistibly sweet. "I was alone in my room," she related in after years; "I had knelt down to make my morning prayer, when suddenly the room seemed to disappear; I no longer knew where I was, nor whether or not I had a body. I seemed to be surrounded by a wonderful light, and my soul was flooded with ineffable joy. Then I heard a voice so melodious that no earthly music can compare with it, and it sang these words, leaving a mysterious interval between them: '*To be the spouse of God—what an honour is this! What a privilege!*'"

"Then all was silence again, the light disappeared, and I found myself in floods of

tears, and filled with a rapturous happiness, like one who has come back from Heaven after having contemplated its splendours and sounded the depths of its unfathomable secrets."

The heavenly voice had made no mention of Carmel, and yet from that moment it was in that direction that the aspirations of the young girl turned. Without delay she went to ask admission into the Convent of Poitiers; but Mr. Bertrand, informed of her plans, had been there before her, and had obtained a promise that he would never be deprived of his daughter. When, then, the young girl arrived in joyful expectation, the Prioress, Mother Aimée of Jesus,* said to her, point-blank: "You want to make a vow of obedience, do you not, my child? Very well, you are going to begin to practice it now by going home to your father. I will let you know when you may enter." Clare understood by this that she must wait till her father's death, and though her heart

* A member of the d'Ulys family, well-known at that time in Poitiers and the neighbourhood for their numerous benefactions.

was ready to break, the thought that the delay was imposed on her by God Himself soon restored peace to her soul.

A short time after this, Father de Beau-regard, her director, was nominated Bishop of Orleans. This was another heavy sacrifice for the young girl, who lost in him a devoted and paternal guide. Though she continued to ask his advice by letters, she nevertheless considered it wise to put herself under another director in Poitiers itself. She thought of addressing herself to Father de Rochemonteix, Superior of the Carmel, but, in order to get the merit of obedience, she begged her cousin, Miss Theresa Bertrand (who since her mother's death had acted as her counsellor) to choose a director for her. She said to herself: "I am sure my cousin will send me to some good old Canon of the Cathedral!" What was her surprise when Father de Rochemonteix was suggested to her. The Father in his turn soon realised that God was calling this chosen soul to a high degree of perfection, so he tried her by continual reproofs and humiliations. A little incident may be

quoted to prove how beneficial this treatment was to her soul. Shawls were then in fashion, and Clare had been given a very handsome one, which she wore gracefully draped over her shoulders. She felt inwardly that God was asking her to sacrifice this little satisfaction of self-love; it needed only a pin to fasten the shawl and make it look more simple. "But I refused Jesus the pin!" she one day confessed. "How ungrateful I was!" However, her Divine Master still persisted, through her director. "My child," the latter said to her, "there is about you an air of fashion which I should like to see disappear." "Father," Clare answered, "I really cannot dress more simply. Look, my dress is dark, and I have been given this shawl, so ought I not to wear it?" The voice of God's minister, joined to that of her conscience, did not, however, all at once succeed in overcoming Clare's vanity. Bishop de Beauregard wrote to her years afterwards at the Carmel: "*Humble yourself, keep yourself very little; remember that you once wore a shawl which displeased your Divine Lord and me.*" How did

the holy old man know the secret which the young religious had confided to no one? Only God could have revealed it to him, thus showing the importance attached by His Sacred Heart to this apparently trivial incident.



CHAPTER III.

Clare's personal appearance.—Her good works.

In the incident just related the young girl, as she avowed later, had had no desire but that of giving herself a little personal satisfaction. She had not the least thought of making herself attractive, although she had received several proposals of marriage. Indeed, in spite of her modesty, or rather because of it, she attracted attention. She was naturally gentle, kind, and refined. In spite of a somewhat cold manner her nature was ardent, and she possessed a loving and generous heart, a lively intelligence, and great common sense, joined to childlike simplicity. People consequently noticed her, and she succeeded so well in winning general sympathy and esteem that, notwithstanding her humble position, she was received into the most distinguished circles. And every-

where her piety and virtue exercised a salutary influence over the souls of others. One Sunday, having gone out with some very fashionable acquaintances, she assisted at Mass in a poor, little village church. When Mass was over, Clare came out terribly distressed. The poverty of the church was not the poverty of Bethlehem; it was a state of misery and disorder bordering on sacrilege. Clare's grief was so great that she could not speak.

"What is the matter with you?" her friends asked. "Ah!" she replied, "I am astonished you are not as grieved as I am, and I cannot understand how you could assist unmoved at Mass decked out in lace, and wearing beautiful hats, while Our Lord is worse lodged than a beggar in the streets, and worse clothed than one of your servants." These words came so evidently from the heart that they did not wound the rich worldlings, but filled them with confusion and remorse, and soon the poor barn gave place to a beautiful chapel.

Clare exercised the same influence over the poor. She had such a great love for

them, and took such evident delight in ministering to them, that the outcasts of this world looked upon her as an angel come down from Heaven to console them. Every year she spent some months in the country, and during her stay she taught Catechism to the little village children. The following anecdote reveals the success of her apostolate and the admiration with which she inspired these simple people. “Oh! Miss,” said a poor woman to her, “don’t refuse to take charge of my daughter. I warn you she is dreadfully tiresome and half-witted, but that doesn’t matter—you can give her *sense*; you only have to wish it!” Clare undertook the difficult task, and really succeeded in awakening some intelligence in the poor child, and, above all, in making her good and pious.

In her family circle, Clare showed herself more affectionate and devoted than anywhere else. Her father lavished the most tender affection on her. One day, seeing him sad and anxious, she shed tears in secret on his account. He guessed this by her red eyes, and said, sadly: “What an

unhappy man I am! I have made my daughter cry.” Nevertheless there were at times discordant notes in this concert of affection. Clare’s goodness had displeased one of her uncles who had invited her to stay with him. He was a man of a gloomy and surly disposition, and when he saw Clare coming back from Mass in the morning, he exclaimed, crossly: “If that were my daughter I would turn her out of the house!” Clare retired to her room and gave vent to her tears; but when her aunt, in great distress, advised her to return home at once, she refused, alleging that this sudden departure would reveal the painful incident, and perhaps sow discord in the family. It was better, therefore, for her to bear it! So she stayed on, and her disagreeable uncle was so touched by her humble and charitable conduct that he was completely softened, and later on let himself be guided in the spiritual life by his saintly niece. But the time was approaching when this privileged soul was to bid adieu to the world in which she had gone about doing good.

CHAPTER IV.

**Clare's entrance into the Carmel of Poitiers.—
The beginnings of her religious life.—A
terrible trial.**

Clare was twenty-four years of age when her father died. She was now free to follow the Divine call, but she was again kept back, this time by her director, who pretended not to believe in her vocation. But this trial was not of long duration. It came to an end at the beginning of 1830, and on March 26th of the same year, the young girl was at last admitted into the Carmel of Poitiers, under the name of Sister Geneviève of St. Teresa.

The event was marked by an incident which shows in a striking manner the value of fidelity to grace, and the regrettable consequences which may follow from letting God's hour pass by.

On the day, and at the very moment appointed for the entrance of the postulant, Clare went to the Carmel, accompanied by

her cousin. Joy lent wings to her feet, and she flew rather than walked. Miss Theresa Bertrand could not keep up with her, and was astonished at her rapid pace. An hour after the doors of the cloister had closed on her, an incident took place in her family, of so grave a nature, that if she had not already crossed the threshold of the Carmel, it would have proved an insuperable obstacle to her vocation. It is true she was not as yet bound by any ties, but her cousin spoke in her defence, declaring that it was too late to go back on the accomplished fact, and finally succeeded in obtaining that Clare should be left to serve God in peace in the cloister.

The first words which Mother Aimée of Jesus addressed to her were engraved on her memory as a programme of perfection which she strove hard to realise: "My child, if you want to be holy and always happy remember this—never let anyone know who pleases or displeases you, whom you find agreeable or disagreeable, what you like or dislike."

But the Mother-Prioress was not the only

one who incited her to fervour. The postulant found in the Community several venerable religious, who, being already professed at the time of the Terror, had suffered heroically to keep their sacred promises inviolate. The example of these saintly Carmelites was a spur to little Sister Geneviève in the practice of all the religious virtues. God, in His turn, directly seconded her efforts by pouring into her soul "the salutary dew of humiliation." In the world, the postulant had shown great aptitude for manual work; but now in the Carmel, in spite of her good will, she became incapable of doing the most elementary needlework. When the time for her clothing arrived, the political horizon was threatening, and there seemed a possibility of the recurrence of the terrible days of 1793, and the sanguinary persecutions against religious. But Sister Geneviève, having declared that she would joyfully follow her Sisters to prison and to death, was given the holy habit.

A new era of greater fervour, of greater peace, and of greater joy in God's service began from the day of her Divine

espousals. The exercises of regular life were a source of delight to her, and her love of prayer made solitude so full of charms that sometimes in her transports of joy she would kiss the walls of her cell. Half of her year's noviciate passed in this manner, when suddenly her consolation gave place to a most terrible trial. She herself related it more than once in the following words: "Six months before my profession, Father de Rochemonteix gave us a retreat, and in one of his sermons he drew a striking picture of the three states in which a soul may be in this life. I could not recognise myself in the picture of the imperfect soul, and still less in that of the fervent soul, but when he described the state of a soul in mortal sin, I was deeply moved, and the more he went on speaking, the more clearly I saw myself. I cannot describe the terror I felt; I went back to our cell almost in despair. It was late, being after Matins, and not knowing what to do, and quite incapable of praying, I sat down by our bed, when all at once, in the silence of the night, a strange voice, which seemed to come from without, said to

me, loudly and distinctly: ‘ *You could have done it, and yet you would not!*’

“Seizing my crucifix, and holding it in the direction whence the voice came, I cried out: “My God, forgive me! Forgive me! Here is my pledge.” I remained the whole night in mortal agony, feeling as if some Divine justice were about to hurl me into the abyss. As soon as morning came I went to Confession, and what was my surprise when I was given as a penance a novena of communions! I approached the Holy Table with a feeling that I was damned! But hardly had the Sacred Host touched my lips when I felt the tears rush to my eyes and flow abundantly. Peace was restored to my soul; the thought of my sins no longer inspired terror, but only a deep and loving contrition. Some time afterwards, thinking over all I had suffered, I complained naïvely to Our Lord, and said to Him: ‘My Jesus, why did you allow such a storm? It was simply terrible!’ The answer was not long in coming: “*I allowed it through love, and to spare you ten years of Purgatory.*”

The day was soon to come when one of Mother Geneviève's most glorious daughters, Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus, would say that "The fire of love is more purifying than the fire of Purgatory." But before the hour of this Divine revelation sounded, the Lord, in His sweetness and mercy, was already commuting, by a few hours of anguish, the long torments which the rigour of His Divine justice would have inflicted on His servant.



CHAPTER V.

Profession.—Interior Abandonment.— Heroic virtues.

After this grace Sister Geneviève applied herself with renewed fervour to the work of her sanctification, and on July 22nd, 1831, she pronounced her holy vows.

The great and solemn day brought her no consolation, and it seemed to her as if she were abandoned by the God who was making Himself her Spouse. She begged Him with tears to accept her as a slave, since He would not treat her as a spouse. And applying herself more than ever to the practice of humility, she asked her Prioress to give her an office in which she might be able to devote herself to the service of her Sisters. She was made third infirmarian. There were many invalids at the time, and among them was a poor Sister covered with offensive sores, which were exceedingly disagreeable

to dress. Sister Geneviève was day and night in the polluted air of the infirmary, and the doctor could not refrain from expressing his admiration at her devoted care. "The Sister who has nursed this nun must be a Saint," he said on the evening of the poor sufferer's death, "for without a special aid from God it would not have been possible for anyone to have stood for so long such a tainted atmosphere."

Another patient required attentions which were very trying. In the height of summer Sister Geneviève had to dry linen before a roaring fire, and she did this every day for so long a time that her face was literally scorched by the heat. In spite of her great interior trials, she bore these mortifications in silence, and appeared so outwardly calm that her Sisters were quite deceived. Noticing that she had no appetite, they thought it was caused by the joy of having made her profession, and one day told her so. Sister Geneviève did not enlighten them with regard to her interior trials, and continued to lead her humble hidden life. But her sufferings were reaching their term,

and the Heavenly Bridegroom began gradually to make His presence felt. It was not a state of ecstasy, nor even of consolation, which she now enjoyed, but a life of union founded on faith and rendered sweet and pleasant by a more sensible feeling of confidence in God. From the time this trial ended till the foundation at Lisieux was broached—that is to say, till 1837—the life of Sister Geneviève was uneventful, though the death of the venerated Mother Aimée of Jesus, so dear to her spiritual daughter, left its impress of sadness upon this phase of her life. But though her sorrow was deep, her peace was not troubled. On one occasion her cousin came to visit her, and said to her, with emotion: “What is going to become of you now, my poor child? You will be so unhappy!” “If I had entered Carmel for the sake of our Mother,” replied the young Sister, “I would without doubt be very miserable, but I came for God, whom I can never lose, and so my happiness cannot be taken from me.” Sister Geneviève’s simplicity and spirit of faith did not allow her to be guided in any way by sentiment, and

though her affection for creatures was strong, it did not hinder her from seeing God first of all in her Superiors. This respect for authority, which made her esteem the orders of Superiors as if they came from God Himself, explains the avowal which she one day made: "I have no attraction except for obedience."

She had said from the first, "In the matter of penances I only feel drawn towards those in general use in the Convent," which was tantamount to saying that she esteemed corporal penances only in so far as they were dictated by obedience. Later on she affirmed this positively when as Prioress she was consulted by Mother Mary Gonzaga about extra penances for the novices. "Be on your guard, Mother," she said, "for that kind of thing without prudence and discretion is only vanity and food for self-love. Teach your children to break their own wills, to practice charity, and to keep their rule perfectly. This is the true penance which is always pleasing to God." But in spite of her prudent advice there was frequently excess in this respect, and we may

note as an original detail that nettles were allowed to grow freely in the garden to serve as extra disciplines for the Community! It was after seeing with her own eyes the results produced by such penances in the sanctification of souls that Sister Teresa tried to find a surer and more rapid method of obtaining sanctity.

Fraternal charity also impressed its divine seal on the soul of Sister Geneviève. She began to show it in a more striking manner when she became Procuratrix, and had to exercise it with regard to all the Sisters. In the Carmel the Procuratrix has to arrange the meals and to superintend the Sisters in the kitchen, consequently her office gives her scope either to soften the austerities of the rule by her charity or to make them twice as hard by her negligence. Sister Geneviève acquitted herself of her office to the satisfaction and edification of all. She also made use of it to *revenge herself* on a Sister who had once given her pain. She heaped upon her so many little kind attentions that the nun, full of confusion and repentance, came one day and threw

herself at her feet, saying : “ I am conquered by your charity ; please forgive me ! ” “ But on that occasion,” said Mother Geneviève, when relating the incident towards the close of her life, “ I did not act in that way in order to conquer myself, but through real affection, for after that Sister had caused me pain I loved her more than before.”



CHAPTER VI.

First intimation of the foundation at Lisieux.

Sister Geneviève Novice-Mistress.—Farewell to the Carmel of Poitiers.

The announcement of the proposed foundation at Lisieux came while Sister Geneviève was still in the office of Procuratrix. The hope of experiencing still greater poverty made her desire to be a member of the new Carmel, but she kept her wish secret, saying to herself: "If God wants me for this work, He will inspire my Superiors to send me." Indeed, as we saw at the beginning of this narrative, Reverend Mother Pauline (the successor of Mother Aimée of Jesus) had already made up her mind to give Mother Geneviève for the new foundation, but she told her nothing about it, and merely named her novice-mistress. It was Our Lord Himself who warned Sister Geneviève of what was to happen. One evening

during prayer she heard these words, spoken interiorly: "*My daughter, to-morrow you will be allowed to unite yourself to Me in Holy Communion; then the Prioress will send for you, and after making you read the sermon on obedience, which you have copied, she will name you Novice-Mistress.*"

The humble Sister was troubled by this revelation, which she thought must come from the Devil. She tried her best not to think of it, but the next morning, to her great surprise, she was told to go to Holy Communion. Then Reverend Mother Pauline summoned her to her cell, and said to her: "Take your note-book and read me the sermon on obedience which you have written out." Deeply moved, Sister Geneviève read it in a trembling voice, and when she had finished, her Prioress announced to her that she was giving her the charge of the novices. She then understood that it was not the spirit of darkness who had spoken to her, but Our Lord Himself, and the thought filled her with consolation. The holy Bishop of Orleans was informed of the news, and he answered by the following letter, which

will be read with profit by all who have the charge of souls: “You will be very surprised to hear that what you tell me of the matter concerning the Rector of St. James’ at Lisieux, and of the four novices who have been confided to your care, is no news to me. I was turning over in my mind the possibility of your having some share in this holy enterprise, but I was not certain what you would be, whether they would send Carmelites to Lisieux, or whether the novices would come to Poitiers, and I was considering if in either case you could be Mistress of Novices.

“Let us now speak of your very important office. The first thing you have to do is to turn to God with confidence, and beg Him to bless your work; the second is to make yourself pleasant to your novices, so that you may gain their love and confidence; the third is to be very skilful in understanding the depths of souls, the inclinations of hearts, and, above all, characters, for the character is the source of good as it is of evil; the fourth is to show great sweetness and unchanging patience,

“ listening to everything without ever be-
“traying uneasiness; the fifth is to conduct
“yourself in all things with great fidelity
“and humility.

“ As for these young souls, you must first
“establish in them a true desire of belong-
“ing to God, and of giving Him everything.
“When this principle is firmly rooted, the
“rest will follow more easily. Inspire them
“with great confidence, and *often tell them*
“*that God is not a fault-finder*, but that He
“is ready to make excuses for souls which
“belong to Him. If you want to teach your
“daughters to get rid of their faults, and to
“strip themselves of the old Adam, make
“them begin by quite tiny sacrifices, above
“all interior sacrifices, but so small that they
“hardly count. Attack undue sensitiveness,
“touchiness, and self-love. When they
“commit faults, console them and promise
“to pray for them. Teach them to be open
“and brief in confession. Teach them to
“despise temptations; to let the village dogs
“bark. Let nothing astonish you, let
“nothing discourage you; be your own con-
“soler. Never speak of your novices except

to the Superior, and to the Spiritual "Father, and even to the latter but little and "rarely."

Mother Geneviève modelled herself on these wise counsels, and the novices formed by her to religious life became strong and numble souls. They inherited from their Mother the stamp of simplicity, which is, moreover, the stamp of Carmel. Their holy mistress loved to repeat to them: "God is no fault-finder."

But time was passing, the novices were nearing their profession, the hour had come for the departure.

Reverend Mother Pauline announced to Sister Geneviève that she had been chosen for the foundation, and named her Sub-Prioress. Sister Elizabeth of St. Louis, who was appointed Prioress, had been for several years the fellow-labourer of Sister Geneviève, "consequently they got on together perfectly." This conclusion of the holy Mother is not strictly logical, for people can live together for a long time without ever being in sympathy with each other. But that she was quite sincere in this respect is shown

beyond a doubt from the following passage in a letter which she wrote to Father Sauvage: "I tell you for your consolation that my heart and that of Sister Elizabeth are one, and what one thinks, the other has already thought."

It is easy to see, in studying the archives of the foundation, that this union of thoughts and desires was directed towards the most holy objects. Both wished to found the new Carmel in the most perfect observance of the rules and customs then in force. Poverty, far from frightening, attracted them; they were ready to make generously all possible sacrifices for the good of the work which they were about to undertake for God's glory. Nevertheless these sacrifices were to prove extremely painful to the more sensitive nature of Mother Geneviève. After reading the account which she herself wrote of their departure, in which she depicts the tender charity which reigned in her Convent, and the sorrow of her religious Mother and Sisters at the thought of separation, one cannot doubt that she made an heroic offering

to God. And all the more so because, being a native of Poitiers, she was leaving behind friends and relations and all the memories of more than thirty years of life passed in her native town. The testimony of those who knew her, witnesses to her great love for her Convent and for the town in which she was born.

But, in spite of all this, she accomplished her sacrifice with the beautiful simplicity which was so characteristic of her virtue.

Before she left the cradle of her religious life, the holy Bishop of Orleans, hearing that she was to be one of the little colony in the quality of Sub-Prioress and Novice-Mistress, wrote her the following lines. The prophecy which they contain cannot be explained by supposing a confusion of mind on the part of the holy old man; he knew Mother Elizabeth as well as he knew Mother Geneviève; he had been director of both, corresponded with both, and had been informed of the nomination of the former. He wrote: "Read more than once the 20th chapter of the *Imitation*. This chapter, so admirable in its wisdom, recommends soli-

tude. But how can *you* keep solitude, for it seems better suited for an anchoress than for a Prioress who must be constantly accessible to all, that she may give advice and sympathy to those who seek it?" More than four years were yet to pass, and Bishop de Beauregard was to die before his words were realised. It was not Mother Pauline who might have influenced him, for she, as will be seen later, thought Mother Geneviève incapable of filling the office of Prioress.

The diligence which took the travellers to Lisieux passed through Orleans, and Bishop de Beauregard and his two spiritual daughters had the consolation of seeing each other again. For the Venerable Bishop it was a day of joy which passed all too quickly in holy converse. "Child," he said to Mother Geneviève, at the moment of parting: "Do not fail to write the history of your foundation, and put in the pleasure which your visit has caused me. Gladly will I now say my *Nunc Dimittis*."

CHAPTER VII.

First years of the Foundation.—Reverend Mother Geneviève Prioress.

It is not necessary to recall here the arrival at Lisieux and the extreme poverty of the Carmelites. We will simply add that Bishop de Beauregard, having furnished them with all that was necessary for making altar breads, they lived at first by the proceeds of this industry, to which they afterwards added the manufacture of incense and church ornaments.

The election of Reverend Mother Geneviève to the office of Prioress was attended by several ups and downs which deserve to be noticed.

At first the Carmel of Poitiers had stipulated that the two nuns were lent *for three years only* to the Convent of Lisieux, unless the foundation should suffer injury through their recall.

When the three years were over, it had been easy to prove to Reverend Mother Pauline, who took a lively interest in the progress of the branch house, that the recall of the two Mothers would ruin the nascent work. But when several months later Reverend Mother Elizabeth died, and it became necessary to elect her successor, Father Sauvage began to feel great anxiety. He was counting on Mother Geneviève being nominated Prioress, and he was afraid of her being recalled to Poitiers. Under the influence of this fear, he did not wish to open a letter he had received from Poitiers before the elections had taken place. The result of the voting was as he desired, and he at last acquainted himself with the contents of the letter. From that moment his whole attitude towards the new Prioress changed; he seemed to have lost all confidence in her, not from the point of view of the guidance of souls, but from that of the temporal administration of the Community. He did not allow her any liberty with regard to even the least expenditure; she could not have had so much as a lock

mended without his leave. And this trial lasted a long time. Eleven years later Father Sauvage died, and Mother Geneviève was asked to go through his papers. God allowed her while engaged in this task to discover the mysterious letter. It contained the words: "Do not name Geneviève Prioress, for she is not capable of filling such a difficult office."

This estimate, apparently so humiliating, was for those who knew the Venerable Mother only an additional cause for admiration. She had been ingenious in thus hiding her talents and her virtues, so as to remain unknown even to her Prioress.

She was much delighted at this incident, and said to herself, greatly consoled: "Oh! if I am Prioress it is certainly only by the will of God."

But to return to the time of the first election. It was preceded, as is customary in the Order, by three days of prayer, during which the Blessed Sacrament was exposed. Our Lord, who five years earlier had wished to be the first to announce to His humble Spouse her office of Novice-Mistress, deigned

again to warn her of the new mission which He was about to confide to her. The first evening of the Triduum she was making the Way of the Cross, and at the second station she heard the Divine Voice saying to her, interiorly : “ *Open your heart to your daughters, and I will open Mine to you.*” After this revelation it was not surprising that she should have penetrated so deeply into the Heart of God, and have shared to so high a degree in His adorable perfections. Her Lord was in a certain sense bound to fulfil the second part of the contract, since she accomplished the first with such fidelity. For did she not in very truth open her heart to shelter her children, to influence them by her supernatural love, to console them in their troubles, and to strengthen them in their weakness ?

During her first term of office, the present chapel was commenced. The interior decoration was only finished in 1891 through the exertions of Father Youf, the Chaplain. Needless to say, this sanctuary was built with the alms raised by the unwearied devotion of the venerable founder. He had been

obliged to reject the plan laid down in the Ceremonial as too costly, but he came as near to it as he possibly could. The expense, notwithstanding, was great, for the land being marshy and unstable, it was found necessary to build on piles. In 1847 the building operations had to be suspended owing to lack of funds.

It was during this same year that Mother Geneviève received from the Carmel of Tours an account of the Revelations regarding Reparation made by Our Lord to Sister Mary of St. Peter, who was still living. Mother Geneviève was at once gained over to the work. "When I think," she used to repeat, with emotion, "that God has chosen the Carmel to do this for him!" Her heart burned with a holy devotion to the Holy Face of Our Lord, and it was owing to the communications which she made to the Bishop that the Archconfraternity of Reparation was established at Lisieux. She also obtained permission to place a picture of the veil of St. Veronica in the Convent Chapel, where some time later, a few weeks before her death, Sister Adelaide of

Providence was to have a vision of the Holy Face.

These coincidences are significant if one considers at the same time the extraordinary circulation of the picture painted by one of the Sisters of Sister Teresa. It seems as if it had been long in the mind of God, or as if the Eternal Will were already manifesting Itself with regard to it, as a preparation for and a prophecy of the good which this Divine Portrait was to work in souls.



CHAPTER VIII.

Second Priorate.—Illness of Sister Mary of the Cross.

Reverend Mother Geneviève of St. Teresa's first Priorate lasted from January 15th, 1842, to January 19th, 1848, as she was elected to a second term of office on January 16th, 1845. The election had been a fresh cause of anxiety to the Superior.

He had answered the claims of the Poitiers Carmel by an urgent request for another delay of three years, in case Mother Geneviève should be re-elected, and had obtained what he asked. As may be imagined, Mother Geneviève was unanimously re-elected. But when in January, 1848, she had perforce to be deposed, in accordance with the Constitutions, there were renewed solicitations on both sides. The Carmelites of Poitiers began to fear that the loan would come to be regarded as a gift, while their

Sisters of Lisieux still found the presence of their saintly foundress indispensable. A new delay was granted, but in 1849 the malady from which she was to suffer for more than forty years declared itself in the form of internal tumour. On hearing this, her first religious family at once claimed the privilege of nursing her, but Father Sauvage pleaded the cause of her poor Community so eloquently that Mother Geneviève was *given* for ever to the Carmel of Lisieux. Though her own natural inclination would have been to return to Poitiers, she had supported the request of the Superior, and had written the beautiful words: "Now that the Cross is planted in the Carmel of Lisieux, how could I leave it?"

Now that the ignominy of this hidden Way of the Cross has been changed into an eternal weight of glory, some of its secrets may fittingly be revealed, so that souls may be strengthened by the heroic virtues which Mother Geneviève was called upon to exercise.

Devotion to the mystery of the Immacu-

late Conception was much practised in the infant Carmel.

Sister Mary of the Cross, the younger of the two Foundress-Sisters, a fervent religious, and a devout client of Our Lady, was inspired to offer herself as a victim to obtain the solemn definition of the dogma.

Some time afterwards an immense luminous Cross appeared to her, and God revealed to her that He accepted her sacrifice, and made known to her the terrible suffering which awaited her. Filled with dread, her soul for an instant revolted at the prospect; then fully conscious of all that it would entail, she renewed her heroic offering. Soon afterwards, although neither her personal nor her family history gave any reasons for anticipating it, she went out of her mind.

While her mind was thus unhinged, piety and virtue never left the invalid. The fixed idea which became her martyrdom was that she would never go to Heaven, since she had sacrificed it for the glorification of her Immaculate Mother, but that she was destined to live for ever in Limbo in the company of unbaptised children. She would

see no one, not even her sister. The only exceptions were the infirmarian and her "Little Mother Geneviève," as she then called her. She could not do without the latter, and regularly three times a day the patient Mother had to sit for a whole hour with the sufferer to console and distract her. Although she was not suffering physically, the invalid never left her bed. Nevertheless at the beginning of her illness she disturbed the Community by her piercing cries, which could be heard from outside. Mother Geneviève, in great distress, begged Our Lord to calm her, and received His promise to do so. The Divine promise was fulfilled, but one evening after Matins during the great silence, though the condition of the invalid did not give any cause for it, Mother Geneviève was seized with a great fear. "Suppose she should scream!" she thought to herself, in terror. Immediately Sister Mary of the Cross gave a piercing shriek, and the nuns came out of their cells in alarm. The holy Mother, greatly distressed, immediately humbled herself for her want of trust. Then she heard the Voice of Our

Lord thus reproaching her: "*Daughter of little faith! did I not tell you that she would not cry out any more?*" But in spite of her want of confidence, He forgave her and renewed His promise, which was fulfilled until the death of her whom it concerned.

In her worst moments the poor sufferer kept before her a little piece of paper on which she had written "Gentleness," so that she might be constantly reminded to practise this virtue. The question of receiving the Sacraments troubled her more than anything else. She believed it was impossible for her to receive them, doubtless because of her conviction that she was forever debarred from Heaven.

Her illness lasted 33 years, and the Carmel of Lisieux had during this time, as successive Superiors, Canon Cagnard, Rector of St. Peter's Cathedral, who replaced the founder, Father Sauvage, on the latter's death in 1853; then in 1870 Father Delatroëtte, Rector of St. James' Church. The latter, being one day in the Parlour with the Community during the last days of Sister

Mary's life, Mother Geneviève gave him news of the invalid. "Do you mean to say you are going to let her die without the Sacraments?" said the Superior. "That is a dreadful thing for a Carmelite!" "Father," said Mother Geneviève, gently, "she is in a most peaceful state; if I suggest her seeing a priest I should terrify her and gain nothing by it." But as the Father insisted, Mother Geneviève went tremblingly to deliver the painful message. As she had foreseen, the sick nun, who before had been perfectly calm and peaceful, on hearing the suggestion started up in bed, and cried out, "How can you, who know everything, come to suggest such a thing to me? Go away. I never wish to see you again!" Poor Mother Geneviève tried to calm her, but as her presence only increased Sister Mary's agitation, she had the sorrow of being unable to remain with her beloved child until the end. This was a very painful trial for her, and a cruel doubt was mingled with her grief. The insistence of the Superior with regard to the Sacraments had troubled her, and she was uneasy about the fate of the soul so dear

to her. They came to announce to her that Sister Mary was no more, and, absorbed in these sad thoughts, she was weeping bitterly, when all at once the Divine and familiar voice made itself heard in her heart. “*Do not weep,*” said the Divine Master, “*she was not capable of agreeing to what was wanted of her, her mind was as if imprisoned. . . . Do not be anxious about her; she is with Me!*”

Then, with her soul flooded with consolation and joy, Mother Geneviève understood that the saintly victim had gone straight to Heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

Grace and Supernatural Gifts.—Conduct regarding Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus.

In the course of her long career, other crosses were laid on the Venerable Foundress, but some of them were too intimate and too bitter to be revealed here below. She, herself, said, with this thought in mind, "You must not write anything about me when I am dead, but only send a simple circular to the Convents of the Order to ask for prayers. There is nothing else to say."

She did not know herself, and did not understand that, besides the many heroic traits which were never to be revealed, there would still be matter in her holy life for a history full of admirable and edifying actions. Nevertheless, we must repeat in her case, with the angelic Sister Teresa, "*Many pages of this history will never be read on earth.*"

The purification of Sister Mary of the Cross lasted from 1849 till January 29th, 1882.

Since such a large part of her time had to be given up to the invalid, Mother Geneviève, herself a constant sufferer, naturally looked upon the possibility of her re-election as Prioress with a certain dread. But her daughters were longing to have her again over them, and, as soon as the three years term of Reverend Mother Teresa of St. Joseph was ended, the government of the little Community was given back to her. This was on January 19th, 1851. To calm her fears, and to set His seal on this event, as on all the other important actions of her life, Our Lord spoke to her these ineffable and consoling words: "*In the same way as I rest in my Father, the Holy Trinity will be your support.*"

The burden thus presented by God seemed less heavy to the chosen one of His heart. She was to carry it for six successive years, to lay it down for three years, and to take it up again on January 18th, 1860. This time the Voice of the Beloved was to speak

more touchingly and more full of mercy than ever before. The preceding election had taken place January 19th, 1857, and, therefore, held good till January 19th, 1860. Nevertheless, the voting was advanced twenty-four hours, and took place on the Feast of St. Peter's Chair. Our Lord explained this to His humble servant: "*It is not without reason that I have changed the day. I did not confide my Church to St. John, who was innocent, but to St. Peter the sinner. I have taken the poor man from the dunghill, to place him with the princes of my people.*"

The faults here alluded to by the Divine Friend have remained the secret of the Venerable Mother. Doubtless they passed unnoticed by the eyes of others, who, if they had known them, would perhaps have regarded them as trifles. But the Heavenly Spouse declares in the Canticles that "a single hair" of the spouse is sufficient to wound His Heart, a Heart so infinitely tender that it is soothed by the smallest act of virtue accomplished by the creature, and pained by the least deliberate sin. But are

we to suppose that this soul, favoured from childhood by divine graces, committed deliberate sins? We may rather believe that Our Lord was reminding her of her faults of frailty in order to keep before her the thought of her own nothingness and of His great goodness, and to give her true humility of heart, while outwardly he was exalting her, and offering her to the veneration of her daughters. For her virtue, so austere and yet so sweet, so sublime and yet so simple, inspired real veneration. She was the very embodiment of sweetness and simplicity, and of a peace which sorrow and care could never change. In the words of Sister Teresa, her love of God made her "soar above all created things." She wished to inspire others with the same detachment, and would not allow herself to be loved with an affection which might have distracted her soul and prevented her union with God. Consequently, she was sparing in her outward tokens of affection; the greatest sign of tenderness which she showed her daughters was to place her hands on their heads with a gesture which recalled

the patriarchs of old calling down blessings from on high on their children. We may quote an example of her detachment which takes us back to the year 1838. Bishop de Beauregard was accustomed to write her long letters, while he answered Reverend Mother Elizabeth in very few words. In order that the latter might have the consolation which she herself had up to then enjoyed, Mother Geneviève let her, for the whole two years before the death of the holy old man, carry on alone the correspondence with him.

The sacrifice was felt deeply on both sides, and on his deathbed Bishop de Beauregard let the avowal escape: "Once I used to receive letters from Geneviève, which gave me great pleasure. Why does she no longer write to me?" "He knows why now," was her answer, when these words were reported to her.

According to the testimony of her daughters, Mother Geneviève was distinguished by extreme meekness and kindness. Her outward bearing was gentle, and people turned to her readily, drawn not by a natural attrac-

tion, but by the perfume of holiness which surrounded her. She did not override difficulties, but used gentle persuasion to attain her end. At times she even erred on the side of conciliation, but happy are those who have only to reproach themselves with an excess of kindness.

The peace which she constantly endeavoured to maintain around her, gave a heavenly expression to her features, and made them singularly attractive, although they were not beautiful. She had a distinguished manner, and an imposing presence in spite of her small stature.

When she exhorted her daughters at the Chapter meetings, her words were full of fire and unction, and those who heard them felt that they came from a heart burning with love, and a soul illumined by the Holy Spirit. But most impressive of all was to hear her communicate a Divine Message. One may imagine the deep emotion with which these souls, athirst for the things of God, heard her say: "Our Lord has charged me to make this known to the Community. He wishes this from you, dear Sisters."

Once she assured them that all then present would meet again in Heaven. She had a revelation also about the sufferings which one of the nuns was enduring in Purgatory, and immediately after her death she repeated constantly: "Pray for her, my children, for she is suffering terribly." This nun, a lay Sister, though very fervent in other respects, had not struggled against an imperfection which her consecration to God and her vow of poverty rendered serious. Instead of spending her life in gratitude and thanksgiving for the great favour which God had done her by calling her out of the world into so holy a state, she sometimes complained in her latter years that, on account of the poverty of the house, she had not all the remedies and material comforts which her infirmities required. In this revelation, Mother Geneviève saw a proof of the desire which God has to find in the souls of religious an ardent gratitude for the inestimable grace of their vocation, and she often repeated this lesson. But it did not make her anxious or fearful, for her piety was full of filial confidence.

There is always harmony in the works of God, and it was, doubtless, fitting that the cradle of the Angel-Apostle of Confidence should have been prepared by one who possessed this quality in so marked a degree.

Nevertheless, Sister Teresa did not find in Mother Geneviève the help which she might have hoped for in sounding the depths of the Divine Heart. Although she had often shown herself a prophetess, Mother Geneviève did not guess the sublime destiny which awaited her daughter. Her humility was even alarmed at different times by the boldness of Sister Teresa's aspirations, which she tried to check. God, no doubt, permitted this in order that the young Saint might remain hidden and unknown, and that the merit of her researches might be more undisputed. The holy foundress, nevertheless, loved and esteemed her greatly, and gave her continually the strengthening and inspiring example of her own austere virtue. God also made use of her on several occasions to console the angelic child, especially during the painful trial which afflicted Mr. Martin. One day, when the state of the

old man was such as to cause his daughters the most poignant anguish, Mother Geneviève, who was at that time ill herself, sent for Sister Teresa and her Sisters, and calmed their fears by repeating to them some words which Our Lord had spoken to her, and which were verified on the following day.

Her familiarity with her Heavenly Spouse did not at all astonish the Community, for they knew how well she prayed. In everything prayer was her great incentive to action, and she had recourse to it on difficult occasions before trying the methods suggested by human prudence. Our Lord at such times was not content only to let her hear His voice, He rewarded her trust by miracles.

One day the cook came to tell her that the supply of butter was exhausted. "My child, I haven't a farthing," she answered, quietly, "but if there is a little butter still left, go on using it, and let us put our trust in God." From that moment the prodigy of Elias was repeated, and Sister Madeleine, even more astonished than was the widow of Sarepta at the sight of her inexhaustible pot of

flour, came at the end of two months to her Prioress, saying: "Mother, I really can't understand it; my little piece of butter is always in the same state! What does it mean? I had only enough for two days, and now, however much I use, it never grows less." "Be at peace," was the answer, "your little stock is on the point of being finished." And, in fact, some days later an alms was given to the Convent, and Sister Madeleine found the pot empty.

Sometimes Mother Geneviève received most opportunely, as regards the moment and the amount, sums of money of which she had need, but these manifestations of Providence, however striking they may be, are to be met with in the lives of all holy founders.

The resuscitation of an apricot tree in answer to her prayers is more original. On hearing that the precious tree was doomed, she had said, "My Jesus, is it possible that you will not give our Sisters anything this summer to refresh them?" and an interior Voice had answered: "*Be not disturbed, there will be apricots.*" And, in fact, the tree, whose blossoms had been withered by

a hard frost, yielded such great quantities of fruit that year that the foliage was hardly visible. She obtained in an equally extraordinary way, a sudden rise of temperature on a bitterly cold day, when the Community were doing the washing in the open-air. While she was praying before the Tabernacle, a thaw set in, and, but for the icicles, one might have imagined that it was spring.

Nevertheless, it must not be supposed that Mother Geneviève was one of those holy persons whose lives are a continued series of marvels. She evidently enjoyed, except for certain periods of aridity and desolation, the sweetness which the Holy Spirit imparts to souls who love Him, and in whom He loves to dwell, but she did not experience the transports, the ecstasies, the striking consolations, the visions, which raise the soul above this earth and make it live in a perpetual intercourse with the invisible world beyond. Her interior life was a life of pure faith. It is true that, at the age of seventeen, she had learnt her vocation in a state of rapture, but when, in her later years, she was questioned as to the manner in which Our

Lord ordinarily spoke to her, she answered, "I know that the voice I hear is the *voice of a friend*, but I know nothing else."

But, even though she saw nothing except with the eyes of faith, how keen and penetrating was her glance! On certain days, in particular, the veil which hid the supernatural world seemed to be torn asunder; when, for example, she received the vows of the novices, it was as though the mystery of the Divine Espousals had been revealed to her in all its incomprehensible splendour.

CHAPTER X.

Humility of the holy Foundress.—Her golden jubilee.

Mother Geneviève's spirit of faith made her conduct towards her daughters who became Prioresses most admirable. She, the Foundress and the Mother, seemed again as a humble novice. This attitude was especially marked in her latter years, when her infirmity made her incapable of filling any office.

The following incident is an indication of what was at that time her habitual attitude. She had given, with the best of intentions, some advice which had been followed by unfortunate results.

The then Mother Prioress, although she venerated Mother Geneviève as a Saint, came into her room greatly annoyed, just as a young infirmarian was reading aloud to the invalid a spiritual book. "Mother,"

said the Prioress, "I beg of you not to interfere in the business of the house. You don't know what is going on, and your advice is worse than useless." "Thank you, dear Mother," replied the holy Foundress gently, "it is a great charity to tell me so. When one has been Prioress, one is inclined to interfere in matters that no longer concern one! It is quite true that I cannot see what is going on, and I may make foolish mistakes. Please, forgive me!" The infirmarian had, meanwhile, retired discreetly to the further end of the room, and was looking in admiration at the calm face of the aged Foundress. When the Prioress had gone, Mother Geneviève, with a sweet smile, turned to the young nun, and, seeing her quite disconcerted and speechless, said to her without the least tremble in her voice, "Well, dear, let us go on with our reading."

This occurred during the last seven years of her life, years of infirmity which confined her to an armchair or to a bed of suffering. But before this long ascent of Calvary, her Divine Spouse led her to Thabor, and there transfigured her. She had been distressed

at the thought that, on her Golden Jubilee, she would be obliged (according to the Carmelite custom) to show herself in public without a veil. During her preparatory Retreat, Our Lord said to her: "*Do not fear, daughter. I will not allow you to be distressed, for I will give you on that day what I refused you fifty years ago on your Profession Day. There will appear even on your face some reflection of My workings in your soul.*" The words were verified, for her soul, on that blessed day, was flooded with a Divine peace, which shone on her aged face, imparting to it a youthfulness and beauty which it had never before possessed. And, as if the joy of her heart had overflowed into the hearts of her daughters, they felt, while fêting her, an indescribable sense of happiness, the memory of which long remained with them. The Jubilarian herself chose the text of the sermon: "The yoke of the Lord is sweet and His burden light." The choice was a revelation of the generosity and love which had inspired her fifty years of heroic self-immolation, and a testimony to the truth of the Master's pro-

mise to those who follow His sweet invitation: "Take on you My yoke. . . ." She was soon to be abandoned, like Job, to every kind of suffering, but in the midst of affliction, no word of complaint escaped her. Always serene and joyous, she continued praising and blessing the Lord with her heart and with her lips.

CHAPTER XI.

Her generosity and patience in suffering.

In 1884, the second year of her last term as Prioress, Reverend Mother Geneviève became a confirmed invalid. Up to that time she had been able to keep the Rule, and follow the Exercises of the Community, although, it will be remembered, she had suffered from a serious tumour for more than thirty-five years. When the malady had first declared itself, no attempt was made to hide from her its nature, or the cruel ravages which it would work in her physical frame. "At this news," she confided later to one of her daughters, "my heart was filled with delight. It was the Feast of St. Andrew, and, while reciting his Office, I kept repeating in a transport, "O, good cross, so long desired, and at length granted to my desires, I come to you with confidence and with joy; receive the disciple of Him

who was fastened to your sacred wood." I should have thought it rash to *ask* for suffering, for I should have been afraid of my own weakness; but since Our Lord found me worthy of it, I blessed Him for it a thousand times. I looked on my soul as a rusty copper vase, and I thought that the suffering which was coming to me would be the kind hand which would rub the ugly, dull vase and make it bright and shining."

This fervour in the acceptance of suffering would not be worthy of admiration if it had been merely a passing impulse, such as is found even in very imperfect souls at times of special grace. What makes it so noble in the case of Mother Geneviève is that it was kept up for nearly half-a-century, through every kind of weariness and suffering.

As long as she could manage to walk, the holy Mother kept her secret for God alone, but at times the evil betrayed itself, and her terrified daughters would find her lying senseless on the ground. On one particular occasion, had it not been for supernatural intervention, she would have died in one of

these attacks. It was winter, and to do a difficult act of charity she went out into the enclosure, in spite of a severe headache, but soon fainted and fell in the snow. Sister Adelaide, who was working in her cell, heard a voice saying to her: "*Go into the garden!*" She obeyed the mysterious summons, and found Mother Geneviève frozen and almost lifeless.

When, in 1884, a serious swelling of the lower limbs made walking an impossibility, she was given a wheel-chair, in which she went to Choir to hear Mass, and then came back and spent the day in a little room adjoining the Community room. She stayed there till the evening, and was thus able to be present at the recreations, of which she was the life and soul, on account of her sweet and unwearied gaiety. Far from becoming self-centred, her joy and serenity increased in proportion to her physical sufferings. She wrote to one of her spiritual daughters: "I hope that the fine weather will improve your health. As for me, I have no hope of improvement; I am very well off on the Cross, blessed be God."

It was touching to see the venerated Mother still keeping the long Carmelite fast. Every evening for eight months of the year she would take her frugal collation alone, by the feeble light of her little lantern. She allowed herself a slight mitigation in the shape of a few spoonfuls of soup; then she would eat her bread, with a little cheese, saying, with a humility which drew tears from her hearers, "My children, I must practise this small mortification, since I cannot share in the great ones which you do."

The following is another of her "small mortifications": In spite of her illness, she would never have in her cell any seat, but the wooden bench prescribed by Rule. When her infirmities increased, she consented to have a chair, but it was a wooden one. "The harder it is, the better it suits me," she said. This was probably true at first, for she was too sincere and simple to dissimulate the truth to her Prioress, even under pretext of penance.

However, when she became completely helpless, an armchair was made for her, and, to suit her taste, it was made very hard, and

so high that, instead of being able to lean back and rest in it, she was obliged to sit on the extreme edge. But everyone thought she liked it so. After some years, the arm-chair needed mending, and in the meantime Mother Geneviève was installed in an old easy-chair, with very soft springs, in which she seemed to be extremely comfortable. The Prioress came in to tell her that the repairs would take two days, and added, in a tone of pity: "How are you going to manage all this time without it, Mother?" The infirmarian, who already had her suspicions, kept her eyes on the saintly invalid, who, while answering that she could easily wait, let escape an involuntary laugh, for she was very witty, and quite saw the humour of the situation. The laugh revealed everything to the young infirmarian. She went after the Prioress, who had just left the room, and tried to persuade her to oblige the invalid to keep the borrowed chair, in which she seemed so comfortable. The Prioress would not believe her, and the consequence was that Mother Geneviève got

back her hard armchair, and kept it to the end.

It was just about this time that she tried to plead the cause of Sister Teresa with the Father Superior. He had gone to the Community-room on the occasion of a ceremony, and Mother Geneviève said to him, timidly : “ Father, in honour of this Feast, I want to ask a favour of you.” “ Well, Mother, what is it ? ” was the answer. “ Oh, if you would only let little Teresa Martin enter ! ” But the only reply of Canon Delatroëtte was to turn away in evident displeasure, with a peremptory refusal. This little incident has a charm of its own. It is interesting to see the holy Mother taking her share in the vicissitudes of a Vocation which has been so fruitful in its happy results for the glory of God and for the good of innumerable souls.

CHAPTER XII.

Terrible sufferings.—Our Lord asks her to offer herself as a victim.

In January, 1888, Mother Geneviève nearly died. Shortly before, in answer to the Mother Prioress, who was questioning her as to her interior dispositions, she said: "Mother, why should I fear death? Our Lord has given me the grace never to judge anyone, and now I count on His promise, 'Judge not and you shall not be judged.'"

In a meditation on Heaven, God let her see an image of the Cross resplendent with light, and said to her: "*The sight of this Cross makes the joy and glory of the elect.*" She was overjoyed on hearing this, believing that she had come to the end of her exile. But, alas! she was deceived. The revelation was not an announcement of eternal rest, but of a final combat which was to last for four long years!

The disease meanwhile continued its ravages. Her legs at first had been merely swollen, but mortification soon set in, and at the beginning of 1890 gangrene declared itself.

Nevertheless, she continued to assist at daily Mass in her armchair, and at the time of Communion she was wheeled to the little grille to receive Our Lord. On Holy Thursday of the year 1890, her Divine Master said to her during her thanksgiving: "*Henceforth, you will not come to Me, but I will come to you.*" And, indeed, after this she was no longer able to leave her bed. But nothing gave any reason for anticipating the terrible attack which took place in the evening during Tenebrae, and which continued to be so serious throughout the night that in the morning she received the Last Sacraments.

The poor sufferer on that Good Friday seemed to her daughters like a living image of Jesus Crucified. As a result of violent sick headaches, her head was encircled by a painful swelling, which recalled Our Lord's thorny crown; her feet, horribly tumefied,

seemed as if torn by nails; and on her lips, parched with fever, arose constantly the dying Saviour's cry, "I thirst." She was gasping for breath, and seemed a prey to indescribable tortures. Those around her expected every breath to be her last. A few days before she had said, in the course of conversation: "I do not understand why there are Carmelites who offer themselves as victims to God. We are all victims by our consecration." But the Divine Master required from her a special offering of this kind. On the evening of Good Friday, while she seemed to be more at ease and resting a little, Reverend Mother Agnes of Jesus (then still a humble Sister), who was alone with her, saw her all at once as if transfigured; her eyes were shut, but there was a heavenly radiance on her face. She had just heard the Divine Voice saying to her: "*My daughter, it is time to offer yourself as a victim.*" A few days later the gangrene disappeared, but her legs were one large wound, and there were deep, broad cavities on her feet. Mortification continued its terrible ravages, and before death came

to release her, the heel and several toes of the left foot came away. The intense pain caused by the internal tumour went on increasing; the saintly invalid could move nothing but her arms, and soon the immolation was complete, for she lost her sight from the excruciating pain. At that time there were not the numerous alleviations of pain which are in use to-day. The doctor, however, suggested morphine; but the Prioress had been misinformed as to the effects of this remedy, and would not allow the invalid to make use of it. Consequently, Mother Geneviève was deprived of this relief in her sufferings. The Community doctor said of her: "I defy any of my fellow-doctors to cite a case such as this; life could only be sustained by a miracle." He did not conceal his admiration, and, with his eyes filled with tears, he knelt one day beside her, begging her to bless him. Another time, having extracted a tooth, he asked leave to take it away and keep it as a precious relic. Throughout her long martyrdom, the holy Foundress preserved her sweet and joyous temperament. She

jested gaily about her sufferings in verses, in which the depth of inspiration compensates for imperfection in form.

Here follow some of these verses:—

“The light has left my darkened eyes,
But in my soul, my Lord, I see
The earthly beauty that men prize,
Can have no further charm for me.

“My ears are idle; earthly sound
Is dimly heard, yet 'tis no cross;
No passing interest holds them bound,
Is not this rather gain than loss?

“All powerful God, kind Father mine,
My senses Thou didst give to me,
All that I have and am is Thine,
With joy I give all back to Thee.

“With David will I tune my lute,
The prophet King, and sing as he,
*‘From tortured head to piercéd foot
There is no soundness left in me.’*”

If her pains became unbearable, she would cry out, “My sweet Jesus, will you not help your poor Geneviève?”

When the Sisters came to visit her, she was the first to inquire after their health, if they were not very well. “You know,” she would say to them, “exterior wounds like mine cause more discomfort than actual

pain." The least service filled her with gratitude, and one might say of her what the Venerable Mother Anne of St. Bartholomew said of Saint Teresa: "The beauty of her soul was such that it made itself felt in everything."

CHAPTER XIII.

How God guided her words and actions.

Ordinarily, people visit the sick in order to cheer and comfort them; but those who went to see Mother Geneviève found light and consolation for themselves.

It is to this time that the following incident belongs, which is given by Sister Teresa in her autobiography:—

“ One Sunday, when I went to the infirmary to pay her my usual visit, I found two old Sisters by her side. I was retiring, discreetly when she called me, and said to me, as if inspired, ‘Wait, my little one, I have only one word to say to you. You are always asking me for a spiritual bouquet. Well, to-day I will give you this one: “SERVE GOD IN PEACE AND IN JOY. REMEMBER, MY CHILD, THAT OUR GOD IS THE GOD OF PEACE.” ’

“ I simply thanked her and went out,

moved to tears and convinced that God had revealed to her the state of my soul. That day I had been severely tried, almost to sadness, and I was in such a state of depression that I no longer felt certain that God loved me. It can well be imagined how the darkness was dissipated, and to what joy and peace it gave place.

“The following Sunday I wanted to know what revelation Mother Geneviève had had about me, but she declared that she had had none. Then my admiration was even greater, for I saw how intimately Jesus was living in her soul and inspiring her words and actions. Oh! that seems to me the most real and true saintliness; that is what I desire to attain to, for it is free from all illusion. . . .”

The eldest Sister of Sister Teresa had at this time the cherished privilege of being continually near the sufferer, in the quality of second infirmarian. One day, owing to stress of work, she had been obliged to omit her prayer, and was grieving over it interiorly, when Mother Geneviève called her and said: “My child, do you know what

Our Lord has just revealed to me? These are His own words: '*It is not the souls who spend all their time praying who are most pleasing to me, but those who prove their love by sacrifice and obedience.*' "

Another time the same Sister, meeting the Prioress talking to some nuns, was very much tempted to stop and listen, as the conversation did not seem at all private. However, she mortified herself and passed on. Hardly had she got to the Infirmary when, without any preamble, Mother Geneviève said to her: "I have a little secret to tell you, my child—how to be always happy and to please Our Lord. Never try to find out what is going on. If you see Reverend Mother talking to some of the Sisters, instead of stopping, make a sacrifice of your curiosity to God. Have you not read in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert of a certain brother who was always in the moon and never did anything, and who was called in consequence 'Brother Fly'? Well, don't you imitate him, don't be Sister Fly." And when the astonished infirmarian told her what had just happened, and asked her

how she could possibly have seen her, “I did not see you,” said Mother Geneviève, smiling, “but Our Lord, no doubt, allows me to tell you this for your good.”

Another religious was tempted on a point of obedience. She had spoken of it to no one, when suddenly Mother Geneviève said to her: “Oh! my child, if we only understood well what obedience is! Our dear Lord made me understand it this morning after Communion. Remember these words, which are not from me, but from Him: ‘*As the bird spreads its wings and flies freely in the air, so the obedient soul takes her flight towards her Beloved, and she is like a Heaven, in which God finds his delight.*’”

An old Sister had been for many years in a state of painful doubt regarding the eternal salvation of her father, who had neglected the practice of religion, and had been carried off by a sudden death.

One day this Sister committed an imperfection which displeased her Divine Lord. He complained of it in these terms to Mother Geneviève: “*She will not humble herself! And yet I had mercy on her father for a*

single act of humility, because at the moment of death he cried to Me, 'Have pity on me.'" One may imagine the sentiments of penitence and gratitude which filled the heart of the offender on hearing this gentle reproach, conveyed in so consoling a revelation.

CHAPTER XIV.

Consolation.—Abandonment.—Agony and Death.—After Death.

In the midst of her physical sufferings, Mother Geneviève continued to live a life of faith without any interior consolation. However, on the night preceding June 5th, 1891 (Feast of the Sacred Heart), she had a dream similar to those mysterious and heavenly revelations of which so many examples are to be found in Holy Scripture. She dreamt that she was in a little bark alone on a boundless ocean. All at once, a youth of wondrous beauty appeared before her, and, after handing her a note, disappeared. She unfolded the paper and read the simple words, "At full sail!" The next day she told her dream with touching simplicity, saying at the end, with a look of peace and joy, "I think, as to-day is the Feast of the Sacred Heart, that I am going

full sail into the Heart of Jesus." This assurance of her union with God was indeed necessary to support her during the hours which were to follow. The angel of her dream, like the Angel of Gethsemane, had come to encourage and fortify her for the supreme combat. The 22nd of July was the sixtieth anniversary of her religious profession, and, as on the day of her heavenly espousals, while all hearts were rejoicing, her own soul was undergoing a martyrdom. In the evening she at last betrayed her anguish by crying out in tones of inexpressible sadness: "O no, the greatest sufferings are nothing—but not to see God!" . . . "It was no longer Mother Geneviève," such is the testimony of those who witnessed her agony, "but a soul in Purgatory."

It was at the time of this trial, and in reference to it, that Sister Teresa said to her, "*O Mother! you will not go to Purgatory.*" And Mother Geneviève with humble confidence replied: "I hope not!" It might be thought that she sighed after death as a deliverance from all her sufferings. Someone having expressed this opinion in her pre-

sence, she answered: "I do not desire to die so that I may suffer no more, but only to see my God!" And she repeated with fervour the words of the dying St. Teresa: "It is time, Lord, it is time! Take me to yourself."

Towards the end of November she grew worse. On the 25th she had Extreme Unction for the third time. As the excess of her sufferings drew from her faint moans, she asked anxiously: "Is not this losing patience? Ah; how unfortunate that would be! Pray, my children, that God may give me His Grace till the end!" Towards 6.30 p.m. she said to the Prioress: "Sixty-one years ago to-day my great pardon was granted to me, and perhaps this evening . . . Heaven . . . !"

However, she passed a better night, and the next morning Reverend Mother Gonzaga, finding a little improvement in her, thought she might go to Mass. The sufferer, who had heard the remark about being better, then lovingly complained to our Lord: "My Jesus, as Reverend Mother finds me better, although I am still suffering

so much, do show me what it is to be really better?" At the same instant all her pains disappeared. She felt absolutely nothing except a sensation of comfort as if she were in perfect health, and resting on a soft bed. This marvellous suspension of the laws of nature lasted half an hour, after which the terrible sufferings began again.

They steadily increased till the morning of December 4th, when they became quite unbearable, and it was impossible to alleviate them. Nevertheless, the physical torture was surpassed by her mental anguish, and she suddenly cried in a plaintive voice: "My sweet Jesus, have you abandoned me?" But immediately, as if to retract this reproach, and to show her love for Him who was only seeming to abandon her, a smile came to her lips, lighting up her face with an unearthly beauty. "Well, Mother," said the doctor to her in the afternoon, "you are always wanting me to tell you that you are going to die. The happy moment has now come."

Night brought no respite to her agony. It was, as Sister Teresa said later of herself, "*pure suffering with no admixture of con-*

solation.” Towards morning, while Mother Gonzaga was supporting her head, she sighed, “Oh Jesus, I always said to You ‘*In te Domine speravi!*’” Tears shone on her closed eyelids, but her face was calm and serene. “O, how long my exile is!” she said, in a tone too touching to be described. “Jesus, Mary, Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul with you in peace! Virgin Mother help me!”

Saturday was dawning when, at the first sound of the Angelus, the patient victim expired. All her children were round her, tearful and sad, but full of gratitude to God for having at last delivered her from her sufferings, and called her to Himself.

Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus relates that:—“*At the very moment of her birth in Heaven, I felt full of an unutterable joy and fervour as if the blessed soul of our Saintly Mother had bestowed upon me at that moment a share in the happiness which she was already enjoying, for I am quite convinced that she went straight to Heaven.*”

The Servant of God had noticed one of the tears which “was *sparkling like a beautiful*

diamond” in the eyes of the dying Mother. “This tear,” Sister Teresa tells us, “which was the last she was to shed on earth, did not fall. I still saw it shining when the mortal remains of Our Mother were exposed in the choir. Then taking a fine linen handkerchief, I dared to approach her in the evening without being noticed by anyone, and I now have the happiness of possessing a Saint’s last tear.”

The religious were allowed to keep the heart of their Mother, that heart which for so many years had been consumed with the love of God and of souls. Her holy remains rest in the sanctuary of the chapel near those of the holy Founder of the Carmel who had died in 1853. On a marble tablet are engrossed the words:—“*From the heights of Heaven look down on us! See and visit the vine which your right hand has planted, and give it perfection.*” (Office of St. Teresa.)



EPILOGUE.



This account of the Carmel of Lisieux would be incomplete if we passed over in silence its offshoots, the flourishing Carmels of Saïgon, Coutances, and Caen. The Carmel of Saïgon deserves special mention, for Mother Geneviève founded it in tears, God permitting it to be to her a source of anxiety and humiliation. The holy religious whom she appointed as its Prioress, showed heroic courage and perseverance in overcoming the grave difficulties which the work encountered. It is true that Reverend Mother Philomena of the Sacred Heart had a stimulus and encouragement in the promises made to her venerable cousin and collaborator, Bishop Lefebvre, Vicar Apostolic of Cochin China. This holy man, being in prison for the faith, and daily awaiting martyrdom, had had a vision of St. Teresa, who an-

nounced to him his release, and asked him "*to establish her Order in Annam, because God would be greatly served and glorified there.*" All the Carmels of the Far East can look to Mother Geneviève as their Mother, for they were all founded from the Carmel at Saïgon under Reverend Mother Philomena.

Together with this latter, the Carmel of Lisieux venerates among its first members, Sister Adelaide of Providence, who was favoured with extraordinary supernatural gifts. Sister Adelaide died before Mother Geneviève, to whom she revealed in a prophetic dream the future glory of their Convent. She appeared in a form of dazzling beauty, holding in her hand an ivory pen. With this pen she pointed out a book on the library shelves next to the Holy Gospels. On the back of this book Mother Geneviève read the title, "Life of —," but without seeing any name following. She was very much struck by this dream, and it was evident that she attached great importance to it. As she was ill at the time, and incapable of going

to see the chaplain, she sent for him, and feeling certain that Sister Adelaide wanted her life to be published, she begged Father Youf to undertake it. But their united efforts came to nothing.

May it not have been the LIFE OF SISTER TERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS, of which this dream was a prophecy?



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